Article

Digital Muslim Review

Cancel Culture among Indonesian Muslims on Social Media

Dynamics and Implications

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Abstract

This article examines the phenomenon of cancel culture among Muslims in Indonesia, focusing on its manifestation on social media and its impact on divisions and perceptions of Islam. The study highlights prominent cases, including Ahok and Tuan Guru Mizan, which demonstrate how cancel culture fosters polarisation among conservative, moderate, and liberal Muslim groups, while reinforcing negative stereotypes of Islam as intolerant. Using qualitative methods and digital ethnography, I observe and documents the practice of cancel culture through the Trending Topic X and Google Trend features. It explores the dynamics of cancel culture, its implications for freedom of expression, and advocates for a dialogical approach rooted in Islamic values to address these challenges. This study aims to contribute to academic discourse on Digital Humanities within Islamic Studies and underscores the importance of fostering unity within Indonesia's Muslim society.

Keywords: Cancel Culture, Social Media, Implications of Cancel Culture, Indonesian Muslims.

Introduction

Indonesia has witnessed significant growth in internet users in recent years. According to the report Digital 2024: Indonesia published by We Are Social and Data Reports, the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 185.3 million in January 2024, representing a penetration rate of 66.5% of the total population (Kemp, 2024). This reflects an increase of approximately 1.5 million users or 0.8% compared to the previous year (Digital 2023 - We Are Social Indonesia, 2023). The majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim, accounting for approximately 87.2% of the total population.

The use of social media, particularly among Muslims, has become increasingly pervasive. Social media usage has generated both positive and negative impacts. One notable negative consequence is the emergence of cancel culture, which involves discrediting, marginalising, or boycotting individuals on social media. Cancel culture is not confined to developed countries such as the United States, South Korea, and Japan but is also prevalent in Indonesia.

Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, encompasses diverse schools of thought and religious practices. Cancel culture is often weaponised to target groups perceived as deviating from mainstream views, such as followers of minority sects (e.g., Shia, Ahmadiyya) or progressive movements. This phenomenon exacerbates tensions between majority and minority groups, deepening divisions within society. Rather than fostering constructive dialogue, cancel culture frequently results in destructive discourse, where logical arguments are replaced by personal or emotional attacks. Instead of promoting understanding, it cultivates hatred and animosity among Muslim groups.

The visibility of cancel culture is amplified through social media, often in response to behaviour considered inconsistent with societal or religious norms. Social media platforms serve as the primary avenue for expressing disapproval, which can escalate into the ostracisation or boycotting of individuals or products (Juniman, 2023).

Towards the end of 2024, cancel culture in Indonesia became a prominent topic of discussion on social media, particularly involving public figures. One recent example is the case of Gus Miftah, a religious leader who garnered significant attention after a viral video showed him mocking an iced tea seller. In the video, he was heard making remarks that many considered offensive (Chanif, 2024). Public reactions were swift and widespread, with numerous netizens criticising his statements as inappropriate. Consequently, cancel culture actions emerged, accompanied by hashtags such as #FireGusMiftah and #CopotGusMiftah on the social media platform X, as well as petitions on platforms like Change.org demanding his removal as Presidential Special Envoy for Religious Harmony and Development of Religious Facilities (Saraswati, 2024). This intense public pressure ultimately led to Gus Miftah's resignation on 6 December 2024.

An earlier case of cancel culture involved Tuan Guru Mizan Qudsiyah from Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. In 2020, a YouTube video of his lecture went viral due to controversial statements in which he insulted the graves of saints in Lombok—sites revered as

sacred—using derogatory terms such as "dog poop graves." This sparked outrage among the local population, who hold these graves in high esteem. The subsequent cancel culture phenomenon saw the community collectively rejecting and boycotting Tuan Guru Mizan. His pesantren, Assunah, located in Bagek Nyaka, Aikmel District, East Lombok, was attacked and burned by an enraged mob (Fikri et al., 2022).

Another significant example of cancel culture in Indonesia is the case of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, commonly known as Ahok. During 2016–2017, Ahok faced widespread cancel culture following blasphemy allegations related to a speech in Kepulauan Seribu, which was perceived as insulting to the Qur'an. The controversy triggered mass protests led by several religious groups, resulting in substantial social and political pressure. This event led to Ahok losing public support, culminating in his defeat in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election. This case highlights how cancel culture can influence political choices within Indonesian Muslim communities.

Muslims' digital activities on social media today are characterised not only by assessment but also by judgement, often extending to disbelief towards those perceived as deviating from societal or religious norms. This underscores the importance of examining the factors underpinning cancel culture and its implications for the Muslim community in the digital era. These cases exemplify how cancel culture operates in the digital age, enabling Muslim communities to rapidly mobilise via social media to demand accountability from public figures accused of wrongdoing.

However, the phenomenon remains controversial. Some view cancel culture as empowering communities to enforce social and ethical standards, while others express concern about the risk of judgement being rendered without due process. Although seemingly straightforward, cancel culture can have devastating consequences for those targeted. Netizens, acting as self-appointed judges, may engage in online persecution and insults without considering the domino effects caused by their actions.

Cancel culture has been a subject of concern among social scientists for over a decade, generating widespread debate within the academic community. In Indonesia, this phenomenon occurs frequently; however, it remains underexplored in scholarly research. Existing knowledge about cancel culture in the Indonesian context is still notably limited. As a complex phenomenon, cancel culture has significant implications for social dynamics within Muslim communities. In Indonesia, it has the potential to create divisions within the ummah and tarnish the global image of moderate Islam.

Previous research, such as studies on the stereotypes of Indonesian Muslims in the coverage of the 212 Islamic defence action by Time and Aljazeera online media, provides relevant insights. This research highlights how foreign media outlets, including Time, frame Indonesian Muslims involved in the 212 action as conservative, ultra-conservative, or hardliners who are racist, intolerant, and even malicious in their stance towards Ahok. Such portrayals contribute to broader negative perceptions of Indonesian Muslims.

Most existing studies on cancel culture in Indonesia primarily examine it through the lens of communication technology and its influence on social media user behaviour. How-

ever, there is a significant research gap regarding how Islamic religious values shape perceptions of this phenomenon. It is essential to explore this issue from an Islamic perspective, considering the principles of morality, etiquette, and justice as outlined in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.

Current literature in Indonesia tends to be theoretical or focused on individual cases, failing to represent the broader Muslim population. This research aims to fill this gap by contributing to academic discourse, particularly for scholars invested in the development of Digital Humanities within Islamic Studies. It analyses the dynamics of cancel culture in Indonesia and its broader impacts.

This research employs a qualitative methodology, emphasising the observation of phenomena and in-depth analysis of their underlying meanings. It utilises digital ethnography by observing and documenting the practice of cancel culture through the trending topics feature on Social Media X (formerly Twitter) and Google Trends, using a case study approach focusing on Ahok and Tuan Guru Mizan. Social Media X and Google Trends were selected as the primary tools for this study due to several key reasons.

Firstly, Social Media X serves as a prominent platform for voicing opinions, criticisms, and engaging in discussions on social issues. Within the context of cancel culture, Muslims frequently initiate or join campaigns to expose or boycott specific individuals, organisations, or products. Secondly, social media platforms provide real-time data, enabling researchers to observe the progression of incidents that trigger cancel culture, from initial discussions to their peak popularity and subsequent effects. Thirdly, hashtags and viral trends are commonly employed to coordinate discussions. These features allow researchers to quickly identify relevant conversations and trace viral trends central to the cancel culture phenomenon.

Google Trends was also chosen as an analytical tool for complementary reasons. Firstly, its public interest analysis feature enables researchers to gauge the level of public interest in specific issues or figures associated with cancel culture. This data is particularly useful for tracking the evolution of Muslim public attention to a given topic over time. Secondly, by monitoring searches for specific keywords, researchers can measure the issue's influence across various geographical regions. Thirdly, Google Trends data complements social media analytics by offering a broader perspective. While Social Media X highlights the dynamics of discussions, Google Trends reveals overarching public interest beyond the confines of social media, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Genesis of Cancel Culture

The Cambridge Dictionary defines cancel culture as the act of withdrawing support for or rejecting an individual or group on social media due to behaviour or statements deemed offensive. A key critique of cancel culture is that it denies individuals the opportunity to acknowledge their mistakes and seek redemption (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

The origins of cancel culture on social media can be traced to The Private Therapy Clinic, which argues that cancel culture evolved from the concept of boycotting, becoming a new trend on digital platforms. A notable case linked to its emergence is the sexual harassment scandal involving Harvey Weinstein, which revealed a broader pattern of misconduct among public figures, sparking widespread public outrage (Naamy, 2022).

According to Velasco, the roots of cancel culture extend back centuries to public acts of humiliation, such as flogging, used to punish individuals deemed guilty. Historically, these practices lacked opportunities for open and constructive debate, mirroring certain aspects of modern cancel culture. However, in the digital era, criticism may occasionally be constructive, highlighting the potential for dialogue in this evolving phenomenon (Velasco, 2021a).

The Pew Research Center conducted a global survey in September 2020 to examine perceptions of cancel culture. The findings revealed a divided understanding of the term: approximately 49% of respondents familiar with cancel culture described it as holding others accountable for their digital actions, while 14% viewed it as censorship, free speech restriction, or historical erasure. Another 12% characterised it as harmful attacks intended to hurt others. Additionally, the survey indicated that cancel culture often involves removing status or accolades from individuals or entities due to offensive behaviour, as well as online insults on social media platforms (Pew Research Center, 2022).

Although the term 'cancel culture' may seem relatively new, the underlying human motives driving it are deeply rooted. The phenomenon gained traction as netizens turned to social media to join communities, viewing cancel culture as a digital trend. This has given rise to negative spaces, including the dissemination of out-of-context information and mass bullying. The limited capacity of social media to convey nuanced facts, combined with the perceived freedom of digital expression compared to face-to-face communication, has fostered toxic behaviours and harmful consequences for those targeted by invalidation.

Previous research on cancel culture includes a study by Joseph Ching Velasco from De La Salle University, titled "You Are Cancelled: Virtual Collective Consciousness and the Emergence of Cancel Culture as Ideological Cleansing" (2020). Velasco's analysis highlights the significant influence of social media in shaping human interaction, including its ability to convey arguments, impose ideologies, and mobilise social action. This emerging power enables the destruction of an individual's public image, rendering them hesitant or embarrassed to reappear in public due to statements or actions perceived as contrary to societal norms (Velasco, 2021a).

Another global study on cancel culture was conducted by Samantha Haskell from Boise State University Graduate College, titled "Cancel Culture: A Qualitative Analysis of Cancelling Practices in Social Media." Haskell explains that cancel culture emerges as a media-driven phenomenon designed to induce shame, leading to social exclusion. Her research, conducted on Media X, examined the case of Kevin Spacey, who became a victim of cancel culture, generating up to 1,600 tweets on the platform. Ultimately, Kevin

Spacey felt humiliated and withdrew from public appearances, having become the target of media-driven cancellation. According to Haskell, cancel culture functions as a form of social punishment enacted through social media, involving several stages: the presence of a catalyst, resistance, support, and the application of specific strategies during the cancellation process. The case study illustrates how social media users actively participate in this cultural phenomenon (Haskell, 2021).

It is crucial to distinguish between cancel culture and traditional boycotts. While cancel culture often entails the exclusion of individuals or entities from social or professional circles, boycotts primarily focus on withdrawing economic support without necessarily resulting in social ostracism (Jusay et al., 2022).

Cancel culture has proliferated significantly on social media, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, as global social media connectivity increased by approximately 73%. Alix Martinez further analysed the impact of online publication platforms, noting that they could serve as sites for cancel culture against authors whose books fail to meet public expectations or provoke controversy (Martinez, 2021).

Research on cancel culture involving Muslims remains limited. One notable example is the case of Tuan Guru Mizan Qudsiyah of Lombok, explored in a study published in the International Conference of Da'wa and Communication. This research examines how Mizan faced cancel culture in the form of boycotts and rejection due to his controversial statements and actions. The study underscores the potential impact of cancel culture on religious leaders and Muslim communities in Indonesia (Fikri et al., 2022).

Collectively, these studies highlight the complex implications of cancel culture for Muslim individuals and communities in Indonesia. Addressing this phenomenon requires a nuanced approach that considers Islamic law, public policy, and the evolving social dynamics of the digital age.

Examining Cancel Culture in Muslim Social Media

Social media is transforming the lives of Muslims by influencing interactions, culture, lifestyles, and social movements (Velasco, 2021b). While users enjoy the freedom to utilise social media, it is imperative that they do so judiciously (Martinez, 2021). Cancel culture can be amplified through virtual platforms such as Meta, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, and other emerging media. This phenomenon often targets public figures, institutions, or brands that are abruptly "cancelled" by the public for perceived controversial statements or actions that offend societal sensibilities (Wong, 2020). Social media platforms, including X, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, facilitate the rapid dissemination of information. When an individual or organisation is accused of misconduct, posts criticising them can go viral within hours. Features such as retweets, shares, and likes accelerate this spread, while social media algorithms prioritise emotionally engaging content, such as expressions of anger or condemnation. This environment fosters the formation of a collective opinion on certain actions or statements deemed inappropriate,

effectively creating a "court of public opinion" dominated by majority sentiment.

Information disseminated through social media often translates into real-world actions. This phenomenon can be explained using the two-step flow communication theory, which posits that information from mass media does not reach the entire audience directly but instead follows a staged process. In the first stage, information flows from social media to select individuals within the mass audience, known as opinion leaders, who act as gatekeepers. In the second stage, these opinion leaders pass the information to the wider audience, allowing social media content to reach a broader population (Octavianata, 2013).

The dissemination of cancel culture through social media typically follows three main patterns, as outlined by Vegh (2013): action/reaction, awareness/advocacy, and organisation/mobilisation. The first model, action-reaction, emphasises emotional and reactive internet activism, often driven by transient issues that capture public attention. For example, in the cases of Ahok and Tuan Guru Mizan, hashtags such as #PenjarakanAhok, #BoikotAhok, and #PenistaUlama trended on social media, particularly on Twitter (now X). The reactions to such digital activities are often tentative, as public engagement with these issues varies between passive and active responses. Unlike the subsequent models, which are more focused on socio-political advocacy and mobilisation, action-reaction activism tends to be short-lived and emotionally charged.

Below are the results of captured social media activity on X that employed the #BoikotAhok hashtag, illustrating the dynamics of cancel culture in action.
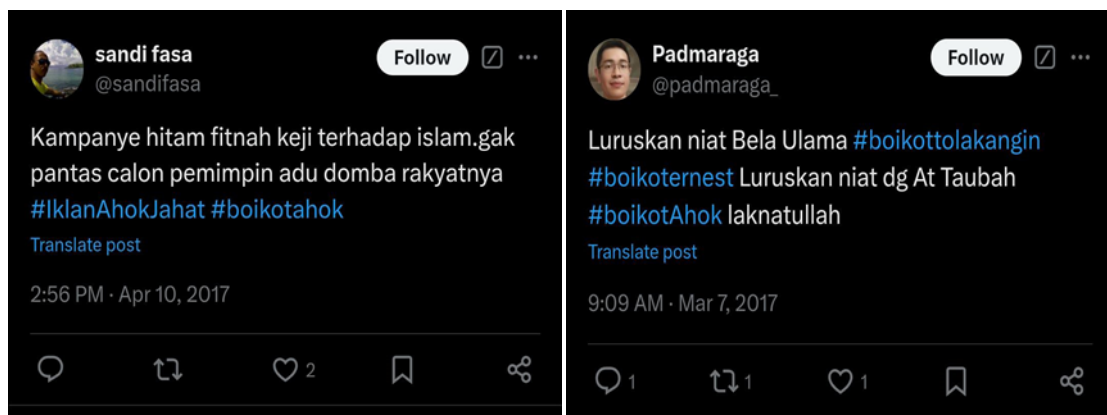

Figure 1: Screenshot of Social Media X

The use of the hashtag and Trending Topic #BoycottAhok on platform X peaked during the height of the controversy surrounding Ahok. Some users employed the hashtag to criticise Ahok's campaign. For instance, the account @sandifasa posted: "Black campaign vile slander against Islam. It's not appropriate for prospective leaders to divide their

people #IklanAhokJahat #boikotahok."

The second model, awareness/advocacy, focuses on persuasive actions aimed at raising awareness of a specific issue or social problem currently prominent in public discourse. These digital activities typically seek to foster communal solidarity and compassion. However, as the activities are tied to specific issues, they are often temporary. This model is exemplified by movements such as "Imprison Ahok" or "Punish Ustad Mizan Qudsiyah severely." Conversely, Ahok supporters countered with initiatives like the "RIP INDONESIA ADIL" movement, featuring a black ribbon logo. These cases illustrate the heightened sensitivity of the Muslim community in responding to various social issues.

The third model, organisation/mobilisation, centres on creating populist movements by mobilising masses around particular issues. This model represents the culmination of online activity, as it translates digital discourse into large-scale, real-world actions. Prominent examples include the 212 Action Movement (Aksi Bela Islam), which reportedly mobilised around 500,000 participants, and the Aswaja Defenders Community Movement (GEMPA) and Laskar Sasak, which organised approximately 500 people with the Islamic Centre as their rallying point in 2020. Organisation-based activism often adopts a tagline that serves as a unifying symbol, granting the movement broader appeal and impact.

This model's outcomes vary depending on the nature of the activism. If the mobilisation leads to the formation of an organisation, the activism often becomes permanent. However, when limited to mobilisation efforts, the activism typically remains temporary.

No.	Type of Digital Activism	Establishment	Type of Movement	Type of Social Media	Movement Example
1	Organisation/ Mobilization	By concept	organized and permanent	X	212 Movement, Aksi BelaIslam, GEMPA, Aksi Bela Lehuhur
2	Awareness/ Advocacy	By issue	organised, public Meta, Mob, tentative	Meta, X	"Imprison Ahok" "Free Ahok" "Ustad Mizan's Law
3	Action/Reaction	By accident	Temporary	X	#PenjaraAhok #AksiBelaIslam #RIPINDONESIAJUSTICE #PenistaUlama

Table 1:
Classification of Digital Activities among Indonesian Muslims on Social Media

Source: Compiled from various references.

The subject of victimisation in this case is Tuan Guru Mizan Qudsiyah, a cleric from East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. His lecture, delivered in 2020 and titled "The Law of Religious Travel to Tombs", contained statements perceived as insulting to the ulama of Lombok. In the YouTube lecture, Tuan Guru Mizan Qudsiyah asserted that travelling, riding horses, packing supplies for grave pilgrimages, and visiting sites associated with shirk are sinful and should be avoided (Wahabis call tain basong tombs | YouTube, 2020).

As a result of his remarks, the local community expressed outrage. Tuan Guru Mizan Qudsiyah subsequently went viral and faced significant online bullying. The consequences of this cancel culture included the loss of his profession as a preacher, his designation as a suspect, and eventual imprisonment by the NTB Police on charges of blaspheming the ulama. Furthermore, the incident escalated to physical violence, resulting in the attack and burning of his institution, the Assunah Islamic Boarding School in Bagek Nyaka, Aikmel District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara.

The second prominent example of cancel culture relates to the blasphemy case involving Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahja Purnama (Ahok). The controversy began during his election campaign in the Seribu Islands on Tuesday, 27 September 2016. In a speech to residents, Ahok stated that he did not compel them to vote for him in the 2017 elections, referencing Surah Al-Ma'idah verse 51. He remarked: "If you can't vote for me, so be it. You were lied to with Al-Ma'idah 51, and so on. That's your right. If you feel you shouldn't vote for me because you're afraid of hell or being deceived, that's okay."

This statement provoked anger among the majority of Muslims. On 7 October 2016, Ahok was reported by Habib Novel Chaidir Hasan, a cleric, for allegedly committing blasphemy. The controversy quickly gained traction, and on 10 October 2016, the non-active Governor of DKI Jakarta issued a public apology, clarifying that he had no intention of offending Muslims. Despite this, his remarks continued to generate public backlash. This culminated in mass rallies organised by various Indonesian Islamic organisations, including a large demonstration in front of the DKI Jakarta city hall, where thousands of participants demanded Ahok's prosecution.

The controversy surrounding Ahok drew widespread criticism from Muslim leaders, though some defended him. Following the court verdict, the case became a focal point of discussion on social media. The hashtag #Ahok trended globally, garnering approximately 155,000 tweets on platform X (formerly Twitter). According to Google Trends data, searches for "Boycott Ahok" spiked significantly during the 2016–2017 blasphemy controversy. The #BoycottAhok hashtag encapsulated strong public sentiment during a critical period in Indonesia's political history, particularly regarding debates on leadership and the handling of sensitive religious issues during Ahok's tenure as Governor of DKI Jakarta.
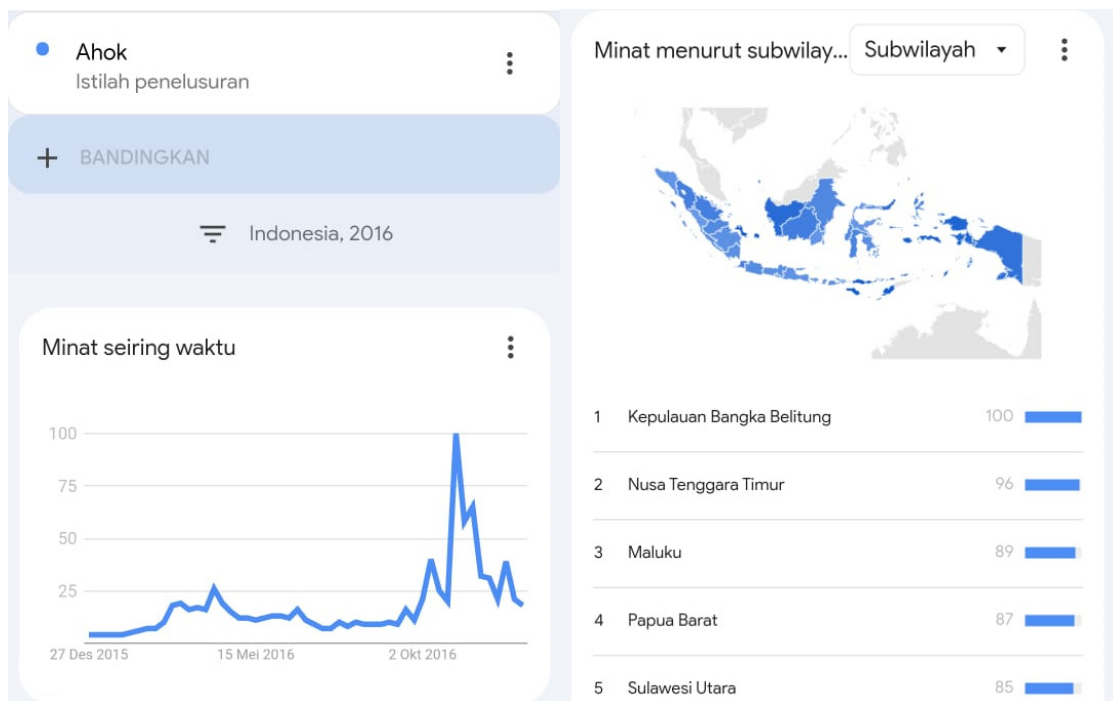
Figure 2: Data Results from Google Trends

The author examines this case using the Google Trends platform, with the keyword Ahok Penista Agama in 2016. The graph indicates that the peak of discussions about Ahok occurred in 2016, with renewed interest in various online media extending until 2020. Geographically, the highest level of netizen involvement was from Bangka Belitung, scoring 100. Although the 212 movement originated in Jakarta, the city ranked 15th with a score of 58. The lowest level of activity was observed in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY), which scored 37.

These findings suggest that cancel culture among Muslims targeting figures or groups associated with the 212 Movement exacerbates polarisation between its supporters and detractors. This polarisation deepens the division between pro- and anti-movement groups, potentially leading to verbal or even physical conflict, both on social media and in real-world settings. Movements such as 212 are often misinterpreted as radical by those unfamiliar with the context, further influencing perceptions of Islam in Indonesia and internationally.

Cancel culture represents a double-edged sword for Muslims. While it can drive positive change, its practice—when misaligned with Islamic values—can have detrimental effects. Consequently, Muslims must approach cancel culture with wisdom, prioritising clarification and employing methods consistent with Islamic teachings to provide advice and education to others.

Sensitivity to Religious Issues and Collective Solidarity

Religion occupies a central position in the lives of many Indonesian Muslims, encompassing spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions. When statements or actions are perceived as offensive to religion, many feel compelled to respond in defence of their beliefs. This heightened sensitivity to religious issues often facilitates the emergence of emotional reactions.

I identify several factors contributing to the rise of cancel culture among Muslims: First, religion as the primary identity: For many Muslims, religion constitutes the core of their identity. Criticism, insults, or misunderstandings related to their religion are often perceived as personal attacks, prompting emotional responses.

Second, limited digital and critical literacy: A lack of understanding regarding social media etiquette and a tendency to judge without verifying information exacerbate the spread of cancel culture. Many social media users react impulsively without ensuring the accuracy of information or grasping its context, prioritising emotional reactions over analytical engagement.

Third, the value of sacredness: In Islam, entities such as the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an, and religious symbols are regarded as highly sacred. Content perceived as dishonouring these symbols frequently provokes backlash.

Fourth, the "filter bubble" effect on social media: Social media algorithms often amplify emotionally charged content, including anger-inducing material. Interaction with specific content prompts algorithms to prioritise similar content, reinforcing perceptions of religious threats. Shared information often lacks verification, allowing hoaxes or provocations to proliferate within like-minded communities.

Fifth, the influence of collective trauma and history: Historical experiences such as colonialism, religious conflict, or discrimination against Muslims contribute to collective trauma. This amplifies sensitivity to perceived attacks on religion. Global injustices, including Islamophobia, the Palestine conflict, or the stigmatisation of Muslims as terrorists, often prompt rapid emotional solidarity, even when responses may lack rationality.

In addition to these factors, the author identifies a more dominant influence: mass mentality. I argue that followership mentality, or herd mentality, significantly shapes Muslims' engagement with cancel culture. This mentality describes an individual's inclination to adopt the behaviour, opinions, or actions of a group without engaging in critical thought or considering the broader impact.

In the context of cancel culture, followership mentality manifests in several ways: First, social influence and group pressure: When members of a community or group collectively call for the "cancellation" of an individual, others often feel pressured to conform. This urge to avoid isolation or the perception of endorsing wrongful actions can drive participation, even in the absence of a deep understanding of the situation.

Cancel culture among Muslims often arises from social and collective pressure on indi-

viduals or groups perceived to have violated religious norms. In Ahok's case, this pressure was particularly intense, manifesting in mass protests, legal prosecution, and demands for his removal from office. This phenomenon is reinforced by the concept of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar (enjoining good and forbidding evil), which some believers interpret as a religious obligation to act when they perceive religion to be misused.

Second, a sense of solidarity: Muslim solidarity fosters strong social pressure within the community. Individuals or groups who abstain from participating in boycotts or cancel culture risk being perceived as indifferent or even as betraying the collective cause. This perception often compels greater participation in such movements, even from those who may not fully endorse the methods of cancel culture.

Third, the political dimension and collective interests: Muslim solidarity is frequently intertwined with political dynamics. In Ahok's case, religious issues became deeply embedded in the political context, particularly given that Ahok was a non-Muslim governor in a predominantly Muslim Jakarta. Religious solidarity was strategically leveraged as a political tool to advance the interests of specific groups, thereby amplifying the effects of cancel culture.

Fourth, moral and justice narratives: The actions of Muslim solidarity were further driven by narratives framing their efforts as moral struggles to uphold justice. For many, the boycott and social pressure directed at Ahok were not merely emotional reactions but were perceived as demands for moral accountability for his actions.

The solidarity factor was pivotal in shaping cancel culture among Muslims during the Ahok controversy. A sense of religious unity, collective identity, and the accessibility of communication via social media were instrumental in mobilising these actions. However, this phenomenon also raises critical questions regarding the boundaries between defending religious values and the risks of exacerbating social polarisation.

The Endangerment of Social Polarisation and Stigmatisation of Muslims

In the context of Muslims in Indonesia, I argue that cancel culture, as seen in cases such as those involving Ahok and Tuan Guru Mizan, has several detrimental effects on the Muslim community. One significant impact is societal division. Cancel culture often creates rifts between supporters and opponents, hindering dialogue, mutual understanding, and social progress. Furthermore, individuals or groups may feel compelled to conform to dominant perspectives to avoid opposition or rejection. This dynamic stifles diversity of thought and inhibits constructive criticism, ultimately obstructing societal development and innovation (Thompson, 2022).

In the case of Ahok, the former governor of DKI Jakarta accused of blasphemy, and Tuan Guru Mizan, a cleric criticised for holding dissenting views, cancel culture frequently exacerbates polarisation among community groups. Within the Muslim context, differ-

ences of opinion, which should be accepted as natural, have instead become sources of conflict. This widens divisions among conservative, moderate, and liberal factions. During Ahok's controversy, narratives targeting specific groups led to divisions among Muslims, with some supporting and others opposing actions against him, particularly during the 2017 Pilkada (local elections). Similarly, in Tuan Guru Mizan's case, when certain Muslim figures are perceived as holding "different" views, cancel culture has led to personal attacks and delegitimisation, bypassing opportunities for healthy dialogue.

Cancel culture related to religious issues can also amplify negative stereotypes of Muslims, both domestically and internationally. When Muslims appear unwilling to accept differences or are quick to criticise dissenting figures, this reinforces the perception of Islam as an intolerant religion. Internationally, the Ahok case was often portrayed as an example of religious sentiment being used to silence political opponents, despite its complexity. The mobilisation of Indonesian Muslims during the 212 Islamic defence rallies was interpreted as a resurgence of militant and intolerant Muslim groups. Studies analysing online media coverage by Time and Aljazeera reveal how Indonesian Muslims were stereotyped. For example, Time framed reports of the peaceful demonstrations as involving "conservative, ultra-conservative, and hardline Muslim groups" characterised as "racist, intolerant, and evil" (unfairly overstepping boundaries). Such tendentious reporting perpetuates a monolithic and biased view of Indonesian Islam, which, in reality, is highly diverse in terms of beliefs, traditions, and practices (Wahdiyati & Romadlan, 2021). These narratives not only harm Indonesia's image internationally but also reinforce stigmatisation and unfair perceptions of the Muslim community (Kwok, 2016).

Internally, attacks on clerics such as Tuan Guru Mizan foster the perception that Muslims are incapable of maintaining harmony amidst differing opinions. Cancel culture often fragments the Muslim community into smaller groups characterised by mutual suspicion. Instead of uniting to address global challenges such as poverty, education, and other pressing ummah issues, cancel culture diverts the community's energy towards internal conflict.

Cancel culture in cases involving Muslims weakens the community by exacerbating polarisation, constraining dialogue, fostering stigmatisation, and undermining solidarity and leadership. To mitigate these effects, a more dialogical approach rooted in Islamic values—prioritising tolerance, wisdom, and deliberation—is essential.

Creating an Inclusive and Peaceful Muslim Social Ecosystem

Cancel culture has significant implications for social, political, and religious dynamics. In this context, Muslims must adopt fair and thoughtful approaches to controversial issues, policymakers should safeguard individual rights while maintaining social stability, and social media platforms must moderate content equitably to prevent the spread of hate speech and misinformation. Cooperation among these three stakeholders is essential for fostering an inclusive and peaceful social ecosystem (Juhri, 2023).

Policymakers face the challenge of balancing free speech with the need to protect

against hate speech. The case of Ahok illustrates how controversial public statements can provoke social unrest. Policymakers must prioritise the promotion of digital literacy to encourage critical thinking and the objective evaluation of information. In instances involving religious figures or sensitive issues, cancel culture has the potential to escalate horizontal conflicts. Governments must design strategies to manage social pressures and prevent conflict escalation.

To maintain peace on social media, platforms must address the considerable challenge of moderating content associated with cancel culture, including hate speech, doxing, and cyberattacks. Algorithms and content moderation policies require continuous improvement to minimise negative impacts. Social media platforms are often accused of bias when handling cancel culture cases, further underscoring the need for transparency in their moderation policies to maintain user trust. If managed effectively, social media can become a platform for constructive dialogue. The cases of Ahok and Tuan Guru Mizan underscore the importance of creating spaces for meaningful discussions that avoid fostering polarisation.

Building on the findings of this study, the author presents specific recommendations for future research directions: First, inter-regional or cross-country comparative studies could explore how cancel culture develops among Muslims in various contexts, such as Muslim-majority countries (e.g., Indonesia, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia) versus Muslim-minority countries (e.g., the United States and the United Kingdom). This approach would identify cultural, social, and political factors influencing the acceptance and practice of cancel culture.

Second, interdisciplinary analysis could provide an in-depth examination of how digital literacy shapes perceptions, communication patterns, and responses to issues that provoke cancel culture. Incorporating perspectives from disciplines such as social psychology, media studies, and religious studies could help illuminate the complex mechanisms involved.

Third, comparative research with non-Muslim groups could investigate differences and similarities between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in their responses to cancel culture and levels of digital literacy. Such studies would assess the extent to which religious or cultural factors contribute to the prevalence or mitigation of cancel culture. Cross-cultural analyses could uncover patterns that offer new insights and broaden the understanding of these dynamics.

These recommendations aim to advance the understanding of digital literacy and cancel culture while providing practical solutions to mitigate its impact on Indonesian Muslims. Future research is expected to contribute significantly to the development of strategies that address the challenges posed by cancel culture in both Muslim and broader societal contexts.

Conclusion

This article highlights the urgent need for collaborative efforts among policymakers,

social media platforms, and Muslim communities to build a more inclusive and harmonious social environment. The detrimental effects of cancel culture, including social divisions, disrupted dialogue, and heightened polarisation among Muslim groups in Indonesia, underscore the necessity for a dialogical approach rooted in Islamic principles of tolerance, wisdom, and mutual understanding. The research also calls for greater attention to digital literacy as a critical factor in mitigating the spread of cancel culture and its negative consequences.

Future studies should prioritise comparative analyses of cancel culture across different regions to identify cultural, social, and political patterns, as well as its intersections with digital literacy. Such research would not only deepen academic understanding but also offer practical insights for stakeholders aiming to address cancel culture's challenges in Muslim communities. Ultimately, this work seeks to reduce negative stereotypes about Muslims, enhance inter-group dialogue, and promote a more constructive and empathetic social discourse, thereby contributing to a more equitable and peaceful society.

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